

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 23rd November, 2022.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Ross Patterson); Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Luke Frost, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Tina Large, Cllr Steve Matthews, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr David Minchella, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Lauriane Povey, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Paul Weston, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Mike Greene (CE), Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Peter Bell, John Devine, Nigel Hart (CS), Garry Cummings (F,D&R&DCE), Martin Gray (ChS), Reuben Kench (CS,E&C), Ann Workman (A&H).

Also in attendance: Members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr Jackie Bright, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Dan Fagan, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Lee Spence, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Steve Walmsley and Cllr Julia Whitehill.

C 53/23 Welcome

The Worshipful the Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the arrangements for the meeting.

C 54/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

C 55/23 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 21 September 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

C 56/23 National Social Work Awards

The Social Worker of the Year Awards was the only major national awards event for social work in England, attracting hundreds of entries every year and reaching millions of people with positive stories of outstanding social work, creative and compassionate practitioners and outstanding practice. It was an opportunity to recognise inspirational social work and to promote the excellent work done by social workers and social care staff.

There were 18 categories in the awards ranging across children's and adult services.

This year staff from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council were shortlisted for 4 of the awards:-

Cheryl Dixon – shortlisted for Newly Qualified Adult Social Worker Award

Festival of Learning, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council – shortlisted for Digital Transformation in Social Work Award

Andrea White – shortlisted for Social Justice Advocate Award

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council – shortlisted for Supportive Social Work Employer Award

This was a great achievement recognising the outstanding work completed by social care staff in the Council, and Stockton's role in supporting their employees.

The Worshipful the Mayor congratulate all of the nominees on their achievements in getting nominated.

The awards ceremony took place on Friday 4 November and the Worshipful the Mayor was pleased to announce that the Council had achieved 2 silver awards.

Festival of Learning won the silver award in Digital Transformation in Social Work and Andrea White won the silver award for Social Justice Advocate.

The Cabinet Member for Adults Social Care, Councillor Ann McCoy also congratulated all of the nominees on their achievements in getting nominated.

C
57/23 **Public Question Time**

The Head of Legal Services informed Members that no Public Questions had been received.

C
58/23 **Review of Polling Stations and Polling Places 2022**

Consideration was given to a report on the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2022.

The report set out proposed changes for polling districts and places taking into account the submission of the Acting Returning Officer and feedback from consultation.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) identified Stockton-on-Tees as requiring an electoral review given the length of time since the last review was carried out.

The final recommendations confirm a Council size of 56 Councillors (the same number as there are now), 27 wards (one more than there are now) and changes to the boundaries of 23 wards with four remaining the same. In addition, as a result of the proposed new ward boundaries, revised parish electoral arrangements had been agreed for Billingham Town Council, Egglecliffe, Grindon and Thorpe Thewles, Ingleby Barwick, Kirklevington and Castlelevington and Thornaby.

An Order had been laid in Parliament and the new electoral arrangements will

come into force at the local elections in May 2023.

As a result of changes to wards and boundaries, it had been necessary to conduct an interim polling district review.

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a requirement to conduct reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every five years. Although not a compulsory review, the same processes should be undertaken for an interim review. The next compulsory review must be started and completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

A Council's area is divided into polling districts with one or more districts making up a ward, with a polling place being the area or building within a polling district in which a polling station is situated.

Polling districts needed to be revised to ensure that they are co-terminus with the new ward boundaries. In addition, the review has also considered:

- Polling Districts - Are they well defined? Do they follow natural boundaries? Are there suitable transport links? Are there any obstacles to crossing polling district boundaries?
- Polling Places – The location, size and accessibility of the polling place and its availability now and in the future
- Polling Stations – The suitability and accessibility of the room or area for use as a polling station. A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the Local Authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election

Electoral Commission Guidance was detailed within the report. In short, polling districts had needed to be re-drawn to reflect the needs of both existing and future ward boundaries. This would be achieved by establishing temporary polling districts for the period 1 December 2022 to 1 December 2023 which would then be merged into appropriate adjoining polling districts on publication of the Revised Register on 1 December 2023. The interim polling district review had therefore consulted on temporary and longer-term changes.

The Acting Returning Officer's submission was published on 21 September 2022 with a closing date for comments of 28 October 2022. The submission summarised the existing arrangements, proposals for temporary polling districts for the period 1 December 2022 to 1 December 2023 and proposals for how these temporary districts would then be merged into appropriate adjoining polling districts on publication of the Revised Register on 1 December 2023.

The Statutory Notice publicising the review was displayed / sent to:

- Libraries
- Website
- Parish Councils
- Community Centres

In addition, the Acting Returning Officer's submission was sent to:

- Website
- Libraries
- All Councillors
- MPs
- Parish Councils
- Area Partnerships
- Disability Groups/ BME/faith community via Catalyst

A table within the report contained a summary of the comments received and comments/revised proposals in response to the consultation feedback.

Final proposals of the Acting Returning Officer, following consultation, were attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places be approved.

C 59/23 Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy Review

Consideration was given to a report on the Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy Review.

Cabinet considered the views and comments received from the Licensing Committee, transport trade and other interested parties following consultation on the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy.

The private hire & hackney carriage licensing policy was approved in 2021 to adopt the Department for Transport published the 'Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards'.

It was vital to review policies to reflect changes in the industry both nationally and locally. The effectiveness of the hackney carriage and private hire licensing regime depends on licensing authorities to acknowledge and manage changes to ensure that, alongside the benefits being achieved, any negatives were minimised for passengers, the trade, and wider communities.

The licensed trade made a number of requests to amend the current policy and a 21-day public consultation was undertaken giving stakeholders opportunity to comment.

The public consultation survey was available online and links were directly sent to all licensees via the Trade Times. The link was also emailed to private hire operators and Stockton Hackney Carriage Drivers Association (SHCDA).

Members, other local authorities and responsible authorities including the police were sent the link and given an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes.

Details of the policy review and how to make comments was also advertised to the public on the Council website and library notice boards.

The consultation closed, with 78 responses with majority agreement on the

proposed changes. A summary of the consultation document was attached to the report.

In response to the consultation two further amendments to the new wording had been proposed on:

- Wheelchair accessible vehicle renewals detailed and highlighted at page 3 of the attachment to the report.
- LPG vehicles detailed and highlighted at page 4 of the attachment to the report.

The full consultation result report was attached to the report.

A background report giving further information on the proposals and reasons for the changes was attached to the report.

The Licensing Committee considered the draft policy and consultation document on 8 November 2022 and no further comments were made and recommendations agreed.

With regard to the next steps, the revised policy would be implemented on 1 December 2022.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The content of the report be noted.
2. The proposed Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy be approved with an implementation date of 1 December 2022.

**C
60/23** **Consideration of the Provision of Free School Meals for all Primary School Children in the Borough**

Council was invited to consider Cabinet's response to a motion submitted to Council on 22nd July 2022 about free school meals in primary schools.

The following motion, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.40 was considered by Council on 22nd July 2022:

"Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council supports every parent of children in our primary schools by providing them with free school meals. Ensuring that every child, no matter what the personal financial circumstances of their parents are; receives at least one nourishing meal a day when in school."

The motion was referred to Cabinet pursuant to paragraph 3.205 of the constitution. Cabinet considered the motion on 15th September and recommended an alternative motion, details of which were outlined in the report.

The reported detailed the following key areas:-

- Benefits of school meals

- Free School Meals (FSM)
- Universal infant free school meals (UIFSM)
- National and local context
- Outline costs and implications of the motion

Studies showed there were clear benefits around school meals take up the guarantee of one healthy meal per day had benefits for children around their health and ability to learn. This was particularly important for young people growing up in lower income families who had poorer educational outcomes than their less disadvantaged peers. Providing more healthy meals to low-income students helps to close the attainment gap and reduce these inequalities.

The analysis published by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in June 2022 showed that the proportion of children in poverty in England was increasing.

The North East Child Poverty Commission (NECPC), in a recent briefing from July 2022, highlighted that the North East of England overtook London to have the highest rate of child poverty in the UK.

In addition, the current cost of living issues were expected to have the greatest impact on the most disadvantaged families. This position was also expected to continue to worsen particularly in the winter months later this year.

It was proposed that the Council call on Government to extend eligibility for FSM to all those in receipt of Universal Credit, in the form of a letter to be sent on behalf of the Council lobbying the Secretary of State for Education to legislate for this.

This proposal was in line with the recent North East Child Poverty Commission report and would have the impact of an additional 2900 children being eligible for FSM in the Borough.

The proposal would also support and link directly with the aim of reducing inequalities across the Borough. This strategic intent was described in 'A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees', our strategic framework for tackling inequalities. Particularly the aspects of focussing on reducing the inequalities faced by the most disadvantaged and marginalised communities, neighbourhoods and people.

The proposal targets the resource to those families that need it the most and does not add to the financial challenges faced by the Council and other councils across the country.

Following a vote the recommendation from Cabinet was agreed.

RESOLVED to call on Government to extend eligibility for free school meals to all those in receipt of Universal Credit.

C **Members' Question Time** **61/23**

The following question had been submitted by Cllr Steve Matthews:-

"Now that plan for the redevelopment of Stockton High Street has got underway, what are the final financial costs for the purchase of the Castlegate Centre, the relocation of the businesses to other locations within the Town Centre and elsewhere, any incentives financial or otherwise to these business's, the demolition, the staffing and legal costs. If you could kindly break down the financial details in your response?"

Regrettably Cllr Nigel Cooke the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing was on bereavement leave and therefore in-line with the Council constitution paragraph 3.39 the question was referred to the next ordinary meeting of Council.

The following question had submitted by Cllr Tony Riordan:-

"Does the Mayor solely represent the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees, and its people, in his official duties, or has the role been widened to include North Yorkshire and its people."

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"The Mayor is the first citizen of the Borough and his role is detailed in paragraph 1.16 of the Councils Constitution. There has been no change to the role of the Mayor and it has not been widened. The Council is a unitary authority but the boundaries of the borough are within the geographical and ceremonial boundaries of the historic counties of Durham and North Yorkshire. The Lord Lieutenant of Durham and Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire both undertake their duties within the Borough."

Cllr Tony Riordan asked the following supplementary question:-

"Unfortunately, I have had to ask this questions as concerns have been raised with me from local residents and business leaders and visiting dignitaries who have present at events within Stockton-on-Tees where the Mayor has been in attendance as the First Citizen of this Borough. The common theme that has been raised is that why does the Mayor say "Greetings from North Yorkshire" and also talk about the benefits of working and living in North Yorkshire etc. Given the fact that the Mayor is the highest honour that a Member can have why is the Mayor not promoting the Borough of Stockton instead of North Yorkshire when he is in receipt of a handsome additional allowance for doing so?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"I'm disappointed with this question as the Mayor is being used as a political football. I have attended events within this Borough with the mayor and he always champions the Borough. I'm not sure you have been to many events to evidence these claims. The Mayor always welcomes guests from outside the Borough, in fact we were out last night at Preston Park with BMBF with the Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire who presented an award. I think you are wrong and I think it is disgraceful that a leader of a group should criticise the Mayors Office when the Mayor can't defend himself."

The following question was submitted by Cllr Stefan Houghton:-

“A consequence of continuous housebuilding across Stockton Borough is the need to process additional local authority collected waste. In 2016/17 this averaged nearly 1 tonne per household per annum across the Tees Valley. How are this Council’s efforts to treat the ever-growing amount of waste through recycling progressing?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport responded with:-

““The Tees Valley Joint Waste Management Strategy (TVJWMS) stated that in 2016/2017 just over 350,000 tonnes of local authority collected waste was produced across the Tees Valley. This tonnage is equivalent to approximately 1 tonne per household per annum and is made up of waste collected from residents by in-house refuse and recycling vehicles, waste delivered to Tees Valley Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) and all waste dealt with by the TV councils which comes under the classification of household waste.

Stockton will continue to provide an excellent collection service for all properties and to encourage the separation of recyclable materials. The recycling material collected by Stockton Council is of a very high quality with only around 3% of the material collected classified as contaminated. We are always looking at ways of encouraging more recycling and in June of this year we launched a scheme for residents to recycle soft plastics, which can’t be recycled with the kerbside recycling material, such as bread bags, crisp wrappers and plastic carrier bags. This harder to recycle plastic can now be brought to collection points in libraries across the Borough.

Like other English local authorities, Stockton is still awaiting the outcomes of the Government’s Resources and Waste Strategy for England (2018), which will determine how Councils collect waste in the future. The consultations have focussed on a number of key areas including:

- Mandatory food waste collections
- A new Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

Responses to the national consultation is already long overdue and clarity on these is crucial to local authority efforts to increase household waste recycling in future.”

Cllr Stefan Houghton asked the following supplementary question:-

“Thank you for your comments on the Waste Management Strategy. The problem is that the recycling rates for this Council are very low and they have been for years and the recent league table shows that we are around the bottom. There are schemes beyond the Tees Valley where residents are being empowered and educated into ways that they can improve their management of waste and I was wondering if Stockton-on-Tees had taken up any of these schemes?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport responded with :-

“Schools have been pointed in the right direction and we are always there to help them. Like all authorities in this country we are waiting for the Waste Strategy for England which we have been waiting for 4 years from this

Conservative government. This will determine how we collect waste in the future and we are talking about mandatory food waste collect and extended producer responsibility. We are looking at getting firms like Coca Cola to foot the bill, somebody will need to sit down and work all this out and it must be taking a while as we have been waiting 4 years. The Council itself has readied itself as much as possible but until government makes its mind up we can't move any further forward. We are talking about changing receptacles and changing vehicles and we are getting caught up in the middle of a 5-year run up of a vehicle lease, for the government to sit on it for over 4 years is absolutely diabolical and the point about this is when we are talking about taking responsibility for things when you have got someone from your party in Australia instead of representing his constituents and sorting out problems"

C 62/23 Forward Plan and Leader's Statement

Council last met on the 21 September. Since then, Cabinet met on the 13 October and then last Thursday when it considered the following matters:

- The Mid-Year Update on the 2022-25 Council Plan
- An Update on the Investment Strategy for Schools, SEN, and Early Years
- Recruitment and Retention in The Care Sector
- School Performance 2021-2022
- The Armed Forces Covenant annual update
- The Member Learning & Development Strategy 2023 - 2027 & Induction Programme for Elected Members 2023
- Customer Service Excellence annual review
- Customer Services Delivery Update
- Selective Licensing Option Appraisal
- The Inclusive Growth Strategy
- Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2022
- Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy Review

Cabinet would next meet on the 8 December and then the 19 January to consider:

- An update on the Medium-Term Financial Plan
- The Annual Report of the Governing Body for the Learning and Skills Service
- A report on Improving Quality in Care Homes
- Proposals to develop further high-quality provision for children in care and with additional needs
- A Flexible Working Update and Policy
- Annual review of the Council Constitution
- An update on the Indigenous Growth Fund
- A report on the School Admissions process
- A report on School Performance for Vulnerable Pupils
- Reports on Care at Home and the Scrutiny Review of Care at Home
- An update on Shared Lives
- A report on our Domestic Abuse Strategy
- A report on Major Events 2022/23 and the Memorial Lighting Scheme 2023/24

- The Stockton-on-Tees Playing Pitch Strategy
- The Environment Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy
- The Council Plan 2023-26

After that the Leader of the Council looked forward to seeing everyone at the next meeting on 25 January 2023.

Before then the Leader of the Council hoped that everyone would enjoy the Stockton Sparkles event and the packed programme of festive events that were taking place across the Borough.

The Leader of the Council also drew Member's attention the gift of giving scheme, for several years the Council had worked with Drake the Bookshop to give every child in SBC care a book to open on Christmas Day. This year the Council was including care leavers and extending the gift to a book or a voucher.